

Chasing a Hat

By C. E. Lewis

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Arnold Thompson, bachelor of forty, was bored. He was bored because the warm weather had come, and he must go away to some resort; because he had to buy a new straw hat; because he had tried the roof gardens and they had offered nothing new; because he had tentatively tried to flirt with a good looking girl that day on the street and she had exhibited her contempt; because of a dozen other reasons belonging to bachelorhood.

When Arnold Thompson bought a hat it was an event. He argued that the fate of a nation depended on the appearance of that hat when placed on his head, and he was therefore a full hour in making his selection. It was an hour of anxiety to him and an hour of misery to the salesman who waited on him. On this day, however—on this day when he strode into his hat store and made his wants known, something out of the ordinary was to happen. The bachelor had tried on only nineteen different hats and had posed before the glass only nineteen different times, when he made a discovery under the sweatband of the nineteenth hat. It was a slip of paper, and on it was written in a feminine hand:

If the buyer of this hat is a single man, and a gentleman, he may write to Genevieve Burton.

No address was added, and as the bachelor held the slip in his hand a thrill of romance began to creep into his soul. That's what he had been yearning for for years—romance. He had had it from twenty to thirty, but lost it from thirty to forty and came to the conclusion that his heart never could be stirred again.

"If the buyer of this hat is a single man—"

Well, he was single. He was not only single, but called rather good looking, and he had a fairly good income.

"—and a gentleman—"

Well, he was a gentleman, and no one could be found to dispute the fact. What should follow? He would write to Genevieve Burton. The name pleased him, and as he stood there with the nineteenth straw hat in one hand and the slip in the other he called up a vision of a handsome face and a curly head and a willowy form. He had no business to think Genevieve good looking, curly headed or willowy, but he assumed the responsibility and said to the salesman, much to the latter's surprise:

"I'll take this hat."

"But is it a good fit?"

"I said I would take this hat. Send it home."

As a matter of fact, the hat was not a good fit, and the bachelor had meant to pay over at least nineteen others, but it struck him that he must have the hat as well as the slip of paper found beneath its sweatband. The two naturally went together.

As soon as he reached his club he sat down to write to Genevieve. He found it a hard task. She was a braid of straw hats; she lived far away; she was innocent hearted; she couldn't be invited to take a ride in his auto or to accompany him to the theater and dinner; she was a coy, shy country bluebird and must not be startled. The bachelor started three different letters and abandoned them, and then suddenly discovered that he had no address to write to. But why write at all? Why not chase that hat down until the fair braider was discovered?

A decision was reached in an instant, and half an hour later the man was back at the hat store asking where the hat was made. He was referred to a wholesale dealer. The dealer said that the hat was part of a small stock bought at auction and referred him to an auctioneer. The auctioneer looked his books over and took his time about it, and then "reckoned" it was a Smith hat.

The investigation thus far had consumed ten days, but Arnold Thompson had rather enjoyed them. The detective instinct is more or less strong in the character of every man, and when romance is mingled with it it becomes even more fascinating.

The bachelor flattered himself that he was a student of human nature and that he could get an insight into a person's character through his chirography. He sized Genevieve up as warm hearted, trusting, hopeful and high minded. She probably had been born and reared in affluence, but owing to her father's too extensive speculations in the Texas oil fields, where there was no oil, she had been obliged to turn to straw hats to make a living. It was a shame, and he sympathized with her from the bottom of his heart. He had always said that he wouldn't marry, but—

Arnold Thompson went to Dunbury. He visited every hatter in the hat town, but all went back on the hat. He was told that it might have been made in any one of half a dozen places they mentioned, and the only thing to do was to give up further thought of Genevieve or pursue his quest.

He decided at once to pursue. He always had been flattered by women running after him; how he was running after one of the opposite sex, and there was something novel in the change. He went to Massachusetts and was sent on to Vermont. There they sent him over into Canada, and he reached Canada to be told that Michigan was his likely field.

This occupied a full month. The bachelor did not travel by lightning

express. He stopped on the way to think of Genevieve and take his Turkish baths and get his nails manicured. He got around to Michigan at last, however. He had no sooner set eyes on the Muskegon river at Toledo than he began to be hopeful. During the ride of eighty miles to Detroit he saw many cattails and much marsh grass and other things of which straw hats are made, and his hopes continued to increase.

Arriving at the City of the Straits, the bachelor located the only hat factory in town and then went to his hotel to make ready for an interview on the morrow. He was alternating between fear and hope when a drummer with whom he fell in reached for his hat in the familiar way drummers have on two minutes' acquaintance and looked it over and said:

"Once in awhile one of you New York fellows shows a little common sense in articles of dress."

"How do you mean?"

"This is the best straw hat made, and it was made right here in this little burg."

That settled it, and a bland and complacent smile broke over the face of the bachelor. He could forgive the innuendo because his long chase was at last ended. In the language of Sherlock Holmes, he had run his quarry to earth, and the morrow would bring a crisis. Mr. Arnold Thompson realized that he was off on a tangent. He had the reputation of being a cool and imperturbable fellow, one who never lost his head about women, but he had to acknowledge that he had made a fool of himself in this affair—that is, all his friends would say so. He had some excuses for his own ear, and if they were not sufficient he wasn't going to admit the fact.

At 10 o'clock the next morning the bachelor started for the hat factory. He intended to walk right in and talk about hats and perhaps pass himself off as a retailer. It was a small concern, employing only about half a dozen women to sew the braid purchased somewhere else. The business office and the workshop were in one, and the romancist entered to find a woman about forty years old in charge. She explained that the boss had just stepped out and asked what was wanted.

Mr. Thompson began to talk about hats, and he was making slow work of it when one of the girls came forward and said to the woman:

"Excuse me, Mrs. Burton, but am I sewing this right?"

"Are you Genevieve Burton?" asked the bachelor as she turned to him again.

"I am," she replied as she tried to blush.

"You—you wrote your name and slipped it behind the sweatband of this hat?"

"I did, sir."

"What was your object?"

"Just a trick of the trade. I am paid \$2 a week extra for that. That's why we call it the 'Romance' hat. We have sent out 12,000 hats, and every one has my name in. Has it given you a backache to find out where the hat was made?"

"Never again, Genevieve—never again will I believe in woman or romance!" exclaimed Arnold Thompson in his most tragic tones. And an hour later he was feeling the town and trying to make himself believe that he was traveling to broaden his ideas on his own country.

The Good Old Fashioned Game. Uncle Hiram was bewailing the degeneracy of modern sports. "Look at baseball," he said. "There ain't half the fun in it there as when I was a young man. Nowdays the fellows with the bat don't seem to be able to do anything with the ball. There's lots of games when they don't make a run."

"I find the time when I belonged to the Farnsworths of Prairietown. There was a club up in Heddingville that thought they could beat us without half trying. They challenged us, and we took 'em up. They come down one morning with a whole carload of people from Heddingville to see 'em wipe us out."

"Well, sir, we begun playing at 10 o'clock in the forenoon. The game wasn't finished at noon, and we quit for dinner. At 2 o'clock in the afternoon we went at it again, and mighty nigh the whole town went out to the pasture where we was playing to see the game."

"First one side would get ahead and then the other. Hitting? You never saw such hitting in your life. There was more than two dozen home runs. It was close on to 5 o'clock when the last man was put out. But we beat 'em. We took the conceit out of them fellows, and they never challenged us again."

"But what was the score, Uncle Hiram?" asked one of the listeners.

"Ninety-seven to 99," proudly answered Uncle Hiram, "and I made 15 of them runs myself. Think of that when you hear about a 1 to 0 game in fifteen innings! I tell you, we could hit the ball in them days!"

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ESTATE OF RAPHAEL ISIDORO

Defendant, deceased.

Pursuant to the order of George E. Russell, Surrogate of the County of Essex, this day made, on the application of the undersigned executors of said deceased, notice is hereby given to the creditors of said deceased to exhibit to the undersigned their claims and demands against the estate of said deceased, within one month from this date, or they will be forever barred from prosecuting or recovering the same against the subscribers.

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deceased.

Pursuant to the order of GEORGE E. RUSSELL, Surrogate of the County of Essex, this day made, on the application of the undersigned executor of said deceased, notice is hereby given to the creditors of said deceased to exhibit to the undersigned their claims and demands against the estate of said deceased, within one month from this date, or they will be forever barred from prosecuting or recovering the same against the subscribers.

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